

researchers have not been fortunate enough to discover a passage from Sallust, Livy or Tacitus.

MARCH 12 / Nicholas V, that singular man, who was reluctant to accept the pontificate, and of whom I have already spoken in connection with St. Peter's, established this library about the year 1450. The period had barely drawn to a close during which the clergy had nurtured the most educated class and exercised its worldly wisdom in taming brute force by holding up the prospect of hell. Nicholas V, notwithstanding his superior mind, could not foresee that from the very books he was collecting would spring the idea of submitting faith to *personal examination*, an idea so fatal to the Holy See.

Let us consider this *personal examination* for a moment; it is, in Rome, what the idea of a *republic* is in Paris—the great bugbear of the government. It is necessary, in order to be saved, to follow blindly the practises indicated by the pope; such is the theory of the *Roman* religion. Bossuet, despite his sorry account of the conversions effected by the dragoons of Louis XIV, is looked upon almost as a heretic, and all French Christians of 1829 as being more than half Protestants; an exception is made only for the congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Cardinal S., who deigned to explain this theory to me, may be basically mistaken, but his reasoning is *logical*. According to the Roman doctrine, the pope, Christ's vicar, is entrusted with the salvation of all the faithful; he is the general in chief. If every member of the faith, instead of obeying with humility, should feel impelled to *examine*, there would be disorder in the army, and all would be lost. What are Bossuet's four propositions? An incitation to *disorder*, a move leading to the reading of Voltaire and of Bentham; from this to preaching religion as *useful* is but a step. The writer who has given circulation to this damnable revery is Montesquieu. The Christians of France have taken this joke seriously; is it not used as an epigraph to *le Génie du Christianisme*?<sup>1</sup> The moment you admit the usefulness of good actions, since these actions may be more or less good, more or less useful, there is *personal examination*; you fall into Protestantism.

The Christian who examines the greater or lesser usefulness of

<sup>1</sup> Chateaubriand's epoch-making book, published in 1802. Written in the chaotic period that followed the French Revolution, it is an eloquent defence of Christianity in which the author develops the thesis that Christianity is true because it is beautiful. (Editor's note.)

actions is, without knowing it, a disciple of Jeremy Bentham and of Helvetius. You elude this misfortune, His Excellency Cardinal S.... added, only by the levity of the French spirit. The height of abomination, I was told one day by a *fratone* (the Roman name to designate an intriguing, allert and particularly powerful monk), is to see religion defended as being *useful*. There is one thing even more deplorable, and that is to see it defended as being beautiful, that is to say *useful to our pleasures*. The ceremony of the Rogations is beautiful, as one might say of a pretty ballet (see the charming description in *le Génie du Christianisme*). Such is the substance of twenty conversations that I have had in Rome with worthy people of all opinions. Most of them regard a revolution as inevitable in Italy; could it be prevented, insofar as religion is concerned, by allowing the curates to elect their bishops?

MARCH 14, 1828 / A revolution would be prevented or tempered in its explosive force by reforms; but these reforms would diminish the well-being of aged people who are convinced that the revolution will dare to appear only after they are gone. The social mechanism of the Roman States is so adjusted as to accumulate all enjoyments on the heads of some forty cardinals and some hundred generals, bishops and prelates; they are people without family, most of them quite aged, and whose entire life seems calculated in such a way as to increase in them that habit of egoism so natural to priests of all religions. Three-fourths of these fortunate people are chosen among noble families; and as you know, the present-day nobility is rather liberal in Tuscany, and *carbonari* in Naples. The spirit of the Roman clergy will therefore necessarily be changed sooner than one may think. I believe only two cardinals remain of those I saw in 1802. One is elevated to the rank of cardinal only at about the age of fifty-five. The majority of this body changes every seven years; seven years also constitute the average duration of a pope's reign.

However enlightened a sovereign pontif may be, were he to combine the enlightenment of Cardinal Spina and the great character of Pius VII, it is impossible for him not to be somewhat dazed by the high position that he has reached, which during his whole life has been the secret object of his aspirations.

Unless he be a political man of the first order, and combine an exceptional degree of enlightenment with an iron character, such a pope will not perceive the necessity of a reform in the Catholic church. If

religion does not assume a new form, we shall witness a war to the death between Popism or *belief*, and representative government based on *examination* and mistrust.

Whatever enlightenment the popes of the nineteenth century possess, if they be not altogether superior men, they will protect the *Sacred Heart* and *Jesuitism* as the only means of returning to unity. Austria, which has neutralized the poison and which in no way fears its Ligorists and its Jesuits at home, will do everything in the world to embarrass other sovereigns with them. The Jesuits will be its spies in France, in Belgium, in Switzerland, etc.

"But," I said to my able antagonist, Father Ranuccio, "religion has had the imprudence to become *ultra* in Spain, in Portugal, in France; if this party succumbs to the fashion of constitution, what will become of it?"

"I don't know what is going on in Spain; but I can assure you that the *Constitutionnel*<sup>1</sup> is the catechism of all Frenchmen born around 1800. They do much worse than not believe in Catholicism, they know nothing about it. If you do not submit gracefully, some eloquent philosopher, like M. Cousin, will get up, will go and inhabit a frightful solitude two leagues from Paris, and will do himself the pleasure of founding a religion."

To which my antagonist replied that last year the devout in France bequeathed eight million to religion; and, as I drew his attention to the fact that we could not include old people in our calculations, he gave me to understand that piety did not confer physical immortality, that every man was responsible only for what happened during his lifetime, etc., etc.—in short, a paraphrase of the remark made by Louis XV, "*Après moi le déluge. Cela durera toujours autant que moi.*"

MARCH 15 / Let us come back to the Vatican library. In about 1587, Sixtus V, a man of genius, who should have understood the danger of books, had the building in which we are standing erected, on plans drawn by Fontana. No books are visible. They are shut up in cabinets. There are closets, filled with manuscripts, into which one cannot enter without being excommunicated *ipso facto*. A liberal told us that several manuscripts have been destroyed between 1826 and 1829.

I have already drawn your attention to the view of St. Peter's of

<sup>1</sup> A liberal journal, founded in 1815. Its campaign against Charles X helped to prepare the 1830 revolution. (Editor's note.)